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SUBJECT Braden's Commentary on Admiral Turner

BILL STERNOFF: Our guest commentator tonight is Tom Braden. He's talking About Washington and he wants to teach a history lesson to the new Director of the CIA.

TOM BRADEN: As a former official of the Central Intelligence Agency, I have a high regard for the mission of my old outfit and I hope that its new Director, Admiral Stansfield Turner, will serve the mission well. Which means, of course, that he must speak with accuracy.

I'm sorry that yesterday in his first major encounter with the press, he didn't. A reporter asked Turner about secret payments to foreign leaders, including the million dollars annually which is paid to Jordan's King Hussein. Here is what Turner said.

That procedure of secret foreign aid was actually started with respect to the United States on November 29, 1776 when Benjamin Franklin went to Paris to arrange the secret delivery of aid from the King of France to George Washington. That's what Turner said.

Did the Admiral mean to say that the King of France was sending money to George Washington? That's the impression he gave.

Payments to foreign leaders? Nothing to be shocked about. After all there was Louis XVIth and George Washington. That's what the Admiral seemed to say. And it's wrong.

George Washington never took anything from the King of France and incidentally, Benjamin Franklin didn't go to Paris on November 29, 1776. He landed on the coast of France on that date, and not until a year-and-a-half later did he negotiate a treaty of

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amity and commerce along with the second and secret treaty providing for military assistance.

To use a time honored CIA phrase, George Washington was not regarded by his government as having a need to know about this second and secret treaty. In fact, when the details began to leak, Washington was hurt.

It was a galling circumstance, his private secretary write in a letter. For he certainly had as much right to hear these details as the member of Congress who lay snoring snuggled on one of the benches while these papers were reading.

But the point is, Washington wasn't even told about secret aid much less a party to it.

I doubt that Admiral Turner intended disrespect to the father of his country. He was just making an argument, and somebody in his organization handed him a bad one.

But the CIA has already damaged so many reputations that we ought to draw the line somewhere.

Let's just say, Admiral Turner, and with the greatest respect, that Washington ought not to come to your mind when you're thinking about King Hussein.

I'm Tom Braden, About Washington.